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BOOK REVIEWS.

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW OF ENGLAND. By Edward Wavell Ridges. Pp. 541. London: Stevens & Sons, Ltd., 1915.

Even before the new apostles of culture began to hack their way through Belgium the year 1914 bade fair to be one of the great landmarks in the history of the English constitution. The challenge flung down by the Parliament Act, 1911, seemed about to be taken up, with consequences no man could foretell but which must inevitably have left a permanent mark not only upon the Lords, the Church, the Army and Ireland, but upon the wider problems that are opened by the vista of Imperial Federation. Then came the War, to postpone all this, and to add to it a new set of forces which have seized the constitution in an iron grip. New powers are daily being taken over by the Government and more are daily clamored for by sections of the people who a year ago would have stood aghast at such assumptions by the central authority. How far this tide will recede when the urgent need is past one cannot tell, but it is almost safe to predict that there will survive a new impatience with the waste caused by unorganized effort, upon which will be founded conceptions new to the spirit of the constitution as it lived before the war. It is well, therefore, to have a complete and definite picture of the laws and conventions of the English constitution as they were just before the opening of this critical time, and with this Mr. Ridges provides us in the second edition of his useful text. He has noted at length the content of the tempestuous statutes from the Finance Act of 1910 to the Welsh Disestablishment Act of 1914, and the chapters on the Army, the Navy and the Colonies are of especial topical interest in connection with the share those agencies are bearing in the present titanic struggle. But these matters are presented only in their proper relation to the whole framework of the constitution, not as leading features. The work contains an amazingly complete review of the history and present status of all the functions of the Imperial Government. It has no pretension to the literary elegance which is apt to be the most striking quality of essays on the English constitution; but only by succinctness and rigid brevity could such a mass of material be made available in a single volume of reasonable size. It will serve, therefore, most usefully in the near future as a basis of comparison, for those students who are watching with interest the present developments in the Mother of Parliaments, and as a help in understanding them when they have settled into definite shape.

S. R.

THE FORMAL BASES OF LAW. By Giorgio del Vecchio. Translated from the Italian by John Lisle, of the Philadelphia Bar. Modern Legal Philosophy Series, Volume X. Boston: The Boston Book Co., 1914.

This volume, edited by a Committee of the Association of American Law Schools, contains three essays—a trilogy but a connected work—published originally under the titles of "The Philosophical Presuppositions of the Idea of Law", "The Concept of Law", and "The Concept of Nature and the Principle of Law."

As a preliminary study to the discussion of the questions involved in his problem, the author considers, in the first place, the possibility of an objective or universal definition of law and the conditions under which it may so exist. The arguments of those philosophers who deny the existence or possibility of a philosophy of law are carefully analyzed and the question of the need for a definition of law presented. The function of a definition is more than to make an object clear; it is, in addition, to give the object its proper